

IMPORTING AND EXPORTING

**SHIPPING TO
THE U.S.
THE KEY U.S.
CUSTOMS
DOCUMENTS
YOU NEED
TO KNOW**

Importing and Exporting

Shipping to the U.S. The key U.S. Customs documents you need to know

Clearing your goods for entry into the U.S. can be difficult, but the process can become even more complicated if you neglect to include the proper documentation with your shipment. Customs documentation comprises any documents required by U.S. Customs and Participating Government Agencies (PGAs) to accurately identify imported goods. The U.S., like every country, has its specific rules and regulations regarding the information and documents required from the trade community.

The following is an overview of the documents you need to have in order for your shipment to get where it needs to go.

Five standard documents needed with most shipments

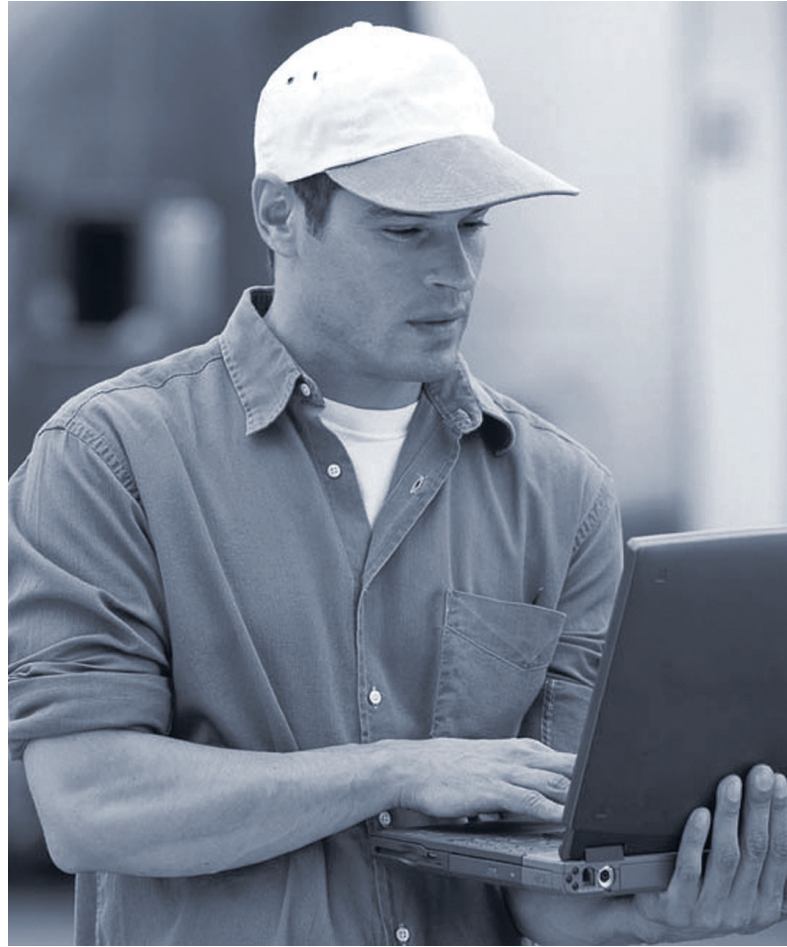
U.S. Customs Invoice

The Customs Invoice is the basic document provided to the carrier, that identifies the type and value of goods shipped as well as the identity of the exporter.

The U.S. Invoice requirements are:

- An adequate description of the merchandise;
- The quantities of the merchandise;
- The values or approximate values of the merchandise;
- The appropriate eight-digit subheading from the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States. If the importer is uncertain of the appropriate subheading number, Customs can offer assistance. The port director may waive this requirement if he or she is satisfied that the information is not available at the time release of the merchandise is authorized.

An overview of the important documents you will need to ship your goods into the U.S.



- The name and complete address of the foreign individual or firm who is responsible for invoicing the merchandise, ordinarily the manufacturer/seller, but where the manufacturer is not the seller, the party who sold the merchandise for export to the U.S., or made the merchandise available for sale

Inward Cargo Manifest

An Inward Cargo Manifest is an itemized list of a shipment's contents. The manifest must be provided to officials for customs clearance either as a paper or electronic copy. Air, ocean, rail and U.S.-Canada border manifests are submitted electronically; electronic manifests are supported on the U.S.-Mexico border, but form CF7533 is still used to support Other Government Agencies (OGAs).

The carrier usually prepares the manifest based on the information provided by the shipper/exporter (the broker does not always receive a copy of the Manifest). A manifest has its own identifier called a Customs Manifest/In Bond number. Once submitted and accepted by Customs, the manifest and the number are monitored to ensure the proper clearance and closure of a shipment.



Commercial invoice

A commercial invoice, or U.S. Customs Invoice, is the document you use to determine the value of the goods. The document is presented by the carrier to Customs officials once the goods reach the border.

The commercial invoice serves a dual purpose for import shipments:

- To enable the exporter to collect money from the importer based on the value of the goods;
- To assist the importer or their agent in clearing the goods through Customs.

Your commercial invoice must include the following information:

- The parties involved in the importing process;
- The goods being transported by the carrier;
- The country where the goods were manufactured;
- The Harmonized System codes for the goods.

Bill of Lading (BOL)

The BOL is a document issued to a shipper/ exporter by a carrier describing the goods to be shipped, acknowledging their receipt, and stating the terms of the contract for their carriage. The carrier provides a copy of the BOL to the exporter before departure, as evidence of the transfer of goods from exporter to carrier. A copy of the BOL is also forwarded to the importer to arrange for the pickup of the goods. The third copy is kept for the carrier's records.

Packing list

The packing list is the detailed list of a shipment's contents, including quantities, items, model numbers, dimensions, and net and gross weights. A packing list should specify per carton (or crate), the number/type of units of material inside, and is typically completed by the exporter at the time they prepare the shipment. Although a packing list is not required by Customs, it is often used by customs brokers to obtain helpful information about the shipment. A detailed packing list will also be valuable should Customs request to do an inspection.

Documents required in special circumstances

- FCC 740 – A Federal Communications Commission document required for devices that emit radio frequencies.
- HS-7 – A Department of Transportation document, applicable to vehicles, tires and safety devices.
- EPA 3520-1 – An Environmental Protection Agency document, applicable to engines.
- PPQ 505 – A U.S. Department of Agriculture document, applicable for a Lacey Act declaration.

Contact Livingston

Have questions or need help with your shipments? Contact your account executive, write to us at: simplify@livingstonintl.com or give us a call at **1-800-837-1063**

